travellers. US authorities also announced that in the coming months, US Homeland and State Department will work to expand the length of time that foreign students can arrive and iive in US. Student visas would be issued up to 120 days before classes begin, as compared to 90 days under current regulations, and students would be allowed into US 45 days in advance of their studies, as compared to 30 days at present.

(c) and (d) India already has a policy that facilitates the visit of tourists and international students who wish to study in India.

Autonomy of Baluchistan province

† 1041. SHRIMANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has taken exception to India's Comment on the explosive situation generated from the groundswell of public opinion on autonomy in Baluchistan province of Pakistan;

(b) whether it is a fact that in order to suppress the human rights voice of Baluch nationals following independence the Government of Pakistan have continued to take oppressive militancy action;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government of India have taken exception to all types of coercive action being taken by Government of Pakistan to suppress the demand of autonomy in Baluchistan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (d) In response to a question on *i'7* December 2005, spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs had said that the Government of India has been watching with concern the spiralling violence in Baluchistan and the heavy military action, including the use of helicopter gunships and jet fighters by the Government of Pakistan to quell it. He expressed the hope that the Government of Pakistan would exercise restraint and take recourse to peacful discussions to address the grievances of the people of Baluchistan.

In an immediate press release by Pakistan on 27th December 2005, "the spokesperson rejected the Indian statement as unwarranted and baseless. Suggesting that the statement was tantamount to meddling in

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

internal affairs, (he spokesperson stated that India often shows an unacceptable proclivity to interfere in internal affairs of its neighbours. Such tendency is contrary to efforts aimed at building an environment of trust, peace and stability in South Asia.

The statement is all the more surprising from the spokesman of India, a country that has long tried to suppress the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people and has a record of systematic and serious human rights violation in the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The heavy handed methods and use of force by India to quell the ongoing unrest especially in the North East of the country and the widespread violence afflicting many of its parts are well known and need no comment.

We are also intrigued by this provocative statement at this time when the two countries are engaged in the peace process to address all issues including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The statement tends to vitiate the current atmosphere of improved relations that accords with the wishes of the people of the two countries."

The Government action in Baluchistan, which President Musharraf maintains is a Frontier Corps law enforcement operation against criminal absconders and miscreants (fararis) and not a military one, continues till date. Pakistani Information Minister Rashid Ahmed said, on 9 January 2006, that the 'operation has been wound up in Baluchistan' but the security forces will stay in the province and strictly deal with those found involved in violation of the law.

Agreement with South Korea

1042. SHRIJAIPARKASH AGGARWAL: Will thePRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the areas in which agreements of co-operation have been reached and signed with the South Korean Government;

(b) the manner in which these agreements are likely to benefit the Indian economy; and

(c) the other highlights of the visit of the Indian delegation to this country?